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ABSTRACT

STRIDE (Success Through Reading Improvement and DEvelopment) is a literacy program developed in 1986 by Crowder College, located in the rural Ozarks of southwestern Missouri. Serving all age groups with trained literacy tutors ranging in age from 11 to over 60, STRIDE has been built on five main activities: (1) develop a philosophy that is "community comprehensive" by making a commitment to an inclusive, flexible approach; (2) educate the community about the program; (3) use only those methods and materials that suit the program's purpose and the students' needs; (4) plan the program carefully, setting high goals; and (5) search for literacy funding from many sources. Under the STRIDE umbrella, the Peer, Adult, and Children's Tutoring (PACT) program has trained high school and junior high school youngsters alongside faculty members and other community adults to become literacy tutors for many age groups. Patterned after PACT, the Partners in Adult Literacy (PAL) program has been designed specifically for the workplace. PAL's goal is to train volunteer literacy tutors on site, matching literacy tutors and students in partnerships, and offering small group instruction in basic skill subject areas. Practical steps to consider when building a literacy program include finding a sponsoring base of operations, reading the research, planning an approach, establishing a purpose, determining the costs involved, maintaining a mailing list of interested volunteers, and working out a simple system of pre- and post-program evaluation. (JMC)

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Community Literacy at Work

with

STRIDE

(Success Through Reading Improvement and DEvelopment)

Overview of a Successful Community Literacy Program

by

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December 1989

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I. Overview of STRIDE (Success Through Reading Improvement and DEvelopment)

STRIDE began in 1986 with a handful of volunteers from area churches and the support of Crowder College. Crowder is a small community college of about 1600 students located in the rural Ozarks of southwestern Missouri. STRIDE is now a full-fledged literacy program with over 200 trained volunteer tutors and 131 active students. Almost 100 more have been served by the program. A total of almost 400 have been involved in the program as tutors or students. It is managed by a literacy coordinator employed through Crowder and a VISTA volunteer employed through ACTION.

STRIDE is unique because it serves all age groups with trained Laubach literacy tutors who range in age from eleven to over 60. The STRIDE adult tutors work one-on-one with all ages of students, our high school and junior high age tutors work with classmates and young children, and our adult tutor volunteers in the workplace provide basic skills instruction in small group settings. We are successful because we network with a broad variety of agencies, organizations, institutions, and individuals.

In our rural two-county college community, the high school drop-out rate is about 30%. In the state of Missouri there are an estimated 400,000 people over the age of 20 who cannot read, write, and compute well enough to function capably in the workplace. In the United States it is estimated that two out of every five people are functionally illiterate. The time has come to address this problem as a community concern.

Building a Community Literacy Program :

1. **Develop a philosophy** that is "community comprehensive". Do not limit your program to helping adults, although that is often the logical place to begin. Society is by nature a multi-clustering of age groups. Let "each one teach one" **and** "each one reach one". Be flexible and willing to compromise traditional methods if individual needs warrant.

2. **Educate your community**. Be visible!! Speak about your program or your proposed program every chance that you get. Let your colleagues know and enlist their help. Network with other agencies and organizations for student referrals and new volunteers. Newletters, flyers, enclosures in payroll checks or bills, newspaper articles, public service announcements through various media are all ways of "getting the word out". Aim at two audiences: those who read well but might be interested in becoming volunteers or who know someone who needs help, and those who are illiterate or functionally illiterate.Your message should emphasize confidentiality and simplicity in attaining assistance . Build trust from the beginning. Network for referrals.

3. **Methods and materials** are useful only when they suit your program's purpose and the students' needs. Train your tutors in a structured method such as Laubach, however, they should be free to use new ideas and materials that enhance the structured learning situation. Laubach materials take the student from the stage of non-reader to just beyond eighth grade level. Laubach is an internationallly accepted method of instruction. Tutors may be trained in a 10-12 hour workshop.

4. **Plan your program and build on your dreams.** Set goals that you may never achieve in your lifetime, just in case... Keep your program energized by reaching out daily to someone who needs help in literacy. Organize your program in a manageable way by *networking* with all of your resources. Volunteers who may not want to tutor may certainly help with other responsibilities. Ask each group to which you speak to offer some tangible volunteer support. If they cannot, then perhaps, donations will be forthcoming. Offer them the opportunity to support individual students or specific groups. Let them know of the progress of their donated dollars.

5. **Funding for literacy comes from many resources.** Find a local corporation large enough to fund a modest grant. Call on business representatives. Offer to provide on-site tutor training and student instruction if they will provide a place. Public relations are strengthened and people who need help begin to receive it. Report regularly to your funding source and put their logo with yours. Show a visible willingness to joint commitment.

II. Community Literacy: Spanning the Intergenerational Gap

Be creative with your program and dare others to do the same. A learning opportunities classroom teacher in one small rural high school dared to be different. She began using Laubach materials for classroom instruction in daily skills for students who needed very practical learning experiences. (The Laubach method was traditionally devised for individualized, one-on-one instruction of adults.) The young Missouri school teacher, also a trained Laubach tutor, recognized a program and materials that would bring success to her special students. She began using the life skills Laubach materials for small group instruction and has helped over 32 students so far. Her students liked the materials so well that the innovative teacher suggested to a friend that the high school might benefit from a training workshop. The friend mentioned it to STRIDE and PACT (Peer, Adult, and Children's Tutoring) was born.

The Laubach method originally evolved from the efforts of a young missionary, Dr. Frank Laubach, who taught in the Phillipines during and after the Depression years. When the young missionary's funding was cut off, the teachers who helped Laubach could not be paid, therefore, they left. Laubach told the cheif of this educational dilemma. The native cheiftain declared that now, "Each one must teach one". *Death* was the penalty if the natives did not comply. No one died and many of all ages learned to read and write. Whether motivation comes from success with materials,or the need for survival, it must be present in some form to span the intergenerational gap.

Intergenerational illiteracy is a tremendous rural and urban problem. A child growing up in a home where reading and writing is not recognized as a needed skill has a much lower chance of becoming a functionally literate citizen. PACT (Peer, Adult, and Children's Tutoring) is a rapidly growing organization under the STRIDE umbrella. It is a program that trains high school and junior high school age youngsters alongside faculty members and other community adults to become literacy tutors for many age groups using the school site as a base of operations for a PACT/STRIDE satellite.

Once trained, the young tutors teach their peers, younger students, relatives, or adults how read and write better. Adults trained in the same workshop reach out to family members or any other STRIDE/PACT referral that may be suitable for them.PACT groups are sponsored by local Future Teachers of America chapters who elected to provide this community service are springing up throughout our two-county area and elsewhere in the state. Students of all ages are motivated by personal success that is readily shared with others. Support from peers, relatives, tutors, teachers, and friends is interwoven within the entire program.

PACT is the strongest, most viable aspect of STRIDE. PACT tutors provide their schools and communities with an invaluable resource as they spend up to two hours a week tutoring before, during, or after school. They use Laubach materials provided through Crowder's STRIDE program. STRIDE is partially funded through a grant from Southwestern Bell. Workshops are arranged through STRIDE as are all major organizational PACT tasks. From an organizational standpoint, PACT works because of careful networking within the established structure of the public schools.

How to create a PACT...

1. Talk to local school representatives about needed tutoring resources in their school.

2. Provide them with information about a reading workshop and ask for a school contact person. (A sympathetic faculty member works the best.)

3. Get in touch with the contact person. Ask about group sponsorship and scheduling conveniences. Meet with the adolescents to be trained and other interested faculty.

4. Schedule a workshop immediately and invite students and the general public. Chances are good that many parents and siblings will attend for whatever personal reasons they may have.

5. Encourage other school personnel to attend.

6. Provide the school with the materials and training at no cost if necessary. You do not have to give away your materials, just collect them after the workshop and issue them as soon as your newly trained volunteer tutors are assigned a student. Some schools may wish to purchase their own.

7. Student/tutor assignment can work in many ways. You should work out a plan that is suitable to the school administration and personnel at each PACT site. You will need to meet with students and tutors during the first contact meeting and keep in touch thereafter.

8. PACT programs should be designed to meet the needs of individual schools. Some may want to practice small group instruction, some may tutor for credit, some may not be able to tutor at school. Just be sure that tutoring is conducted safely and in a manner that is most conducive to individual learning styles. Network constantly with all of the schools involved to determine needed improvements and to be alerted to new referrals.

9. Your literacy program should keep a close watch on all PACT programs. They will yield many adult student referrals and a great deal of parental interest. You may be surprised at the response from the schools, too. Crowder's PACT program works with all ages. Our students tutor in summer school and regular session.

10. PACT is a part of our college, too. Crowder has several college-age tutors and we are presently planning to implement a program that will enable college students to take the training and practice tutoring as a recommended part of their educational program. With the growth of this program, we hope to soon reach out to another unique group of our community ...those for whom English is a second language.

As a community service organization, PACT is soon to become a chartered campus organization.

B. **PAL (Partners in Adult Literacy)** the Vested Interest of Workplace Literacy

PAL is a literacy project that is designed specifically for the workplace. It is funded in part by Southwestern Bell and LIFT (Literacy Investment for Tomorrow which is Missouri governor John Ashcroft's literacy taskforce). Partners in Adult Literacy is another friendly branch of STRIDE. Goals of PAL include training volunteer literacy tutors on site, matching literacy tutors and students in tutor/student partnerships, and offering small group instruction in basic skill subject areas (reading, writing, and math.)

Patterned after PACT, PAL is working in two pilot sites. It has served about 16 students in two local poultry plants. PAL individualized instruction is traditional Laubach one-on-one tutoring. Basic skills classes, taught by the STRIDE coordinator, use a combination of daily skills informational material (how to balance a checkbook, keep a budget, request legal aide, read medicine labels, etc.) and actual workplace materials. Examples include: workplace vocabulary, application forms, work forms, and the company newsletter.

How to become a PAL...

1. Contact local businesses that employ a wide variety of people, especially those that may attract traditionally low income groups.

2. Talk to the personnel manager after clearing with the supervisor. Set up a time to "visit" the site. It should be a time when you can reach the greatest amount of people. Try to arrange to address the employees in the break room to introduce yourself and explain that you will be conducting classes at no cost to them. All they have to do is show up either before or after their work shifts. Allow them to browse through your materials and speak to them informally. Be low key, reassuring, and open to inquiries. Get names. phone numbers. and addresses in order to keep in touch. Don't worry. If they cannot read your

correspondence, they will ask someone else to interpret. They have probably been doing that for years. (It is a good idea to ask the personnel manager to appoint a contact person on site. It should be someone who has trusted contact with the employees, like the payroll clerk.

3. At the time that you visit the site, ask for volunteer tutors. Tell them when you will be able to train them and explain the materials briefly. Allow them to browse, and sign them up at the slightest indication of interest. They may also be encouraged to make referrals.

4. Arrange to hold a training workshop on site. (Publicize it in the company newsletter or with flyers.) Train your tutors as usual, and ask for volunteers to help with the basic skills class. If possible, assign them to students right away.

5. Be present for every student/tutor "first meeting". This is the most important meeting. Communication must be smooth and both parties involved must know his or her responsibilities. Phone numbers and addresses should be exchanged. Materials should be received by the tutor and introduced to the student. Make sure that a suitable meeting place is secured.

6. Start the basic skills classes. Run them for six to eight weeks for two hours a night or during the day if that is more convenient for students. Students should be pre and post-tested so that you can report to your funding source. Individualize the instruction as needed, but encourage students to rely on one another as a support group. Be positive and credit each success. Issue a certificate at the end of each session.

7. Check on all tutor/student partnerships on-site periodically through your contact person. Visibility is important to adults learners. Maintain a close watch over all student/tutor needs.

8. Expect the unexpected: Adult learners have many responsibilities that may interferr with their classes or tutoring. Be patient and accepting. They will be tired from daily routine and not always certain that they belong in class. Treat them like students enrolled in a continuing education class.Ask the personnel manager to mention the students in the company newsletter. **Do not** affiliate them with illiteracy in words or print. They are functionally literate with potential. If you fail to stress their strengths, you will lose your program.

9. Be open to company and student suggestions. Customize each class according to student need, company expectations, and setting. Find out what respective goals are and try to reach a happy medium. Remember you are there to help the student. If you are really aware of student needs, then lesson plans are much easier to prepare.

10. Be alert to family illiteracy . Offer to help find PACT tutors for children or adult STRIDE tutors for spouses. Talk to the employees about how to help their children become good readers and successful students.Offer a free workshop to help parents become more alert to their children's reading needs.Make free books and reading materials available when at all possible. (The business that you are serving may provide a starter library for employees and their families, or may even agree to purchase books, magazine subscriptions, or early learning toys during various holidays for employee awards, in place of cash or other goods.)

11. Be ready to work with students with special needs, especially those for whom English is a second language.

Working for literacy in the workplace is difficult but rewarding. Your program will probably start small. Try to plan a year's worth of literacy work at the site/s that you select to start a PAL program. Adults have many inhibitions and fears that younger students are more aptto shrug off. You have to become a trusted figure in their place of work before your program can grow. The role you play will combine friend, mentor, and teacher.

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Whenever you have sufficiently implemented a PAL program, find out if you can let more people know about it via the media. Local television stations or radio will probably run a public service announcement . This enhances the desirability of your program to potential students and gives the sponsoring workplace some well-deserved credit. If you have a corporate sponsor, such as Southwestern Bell, they may help you find ways of more extensively publicizing the literacy program that they support.

Be alert to students who need to be in an adult basic education classroom pursuing a graduate equivalency diploma. Network with local ABE agencies and discuss the possibility of bringing a GED class to the workplace site. This was done with a great measure of success at one of our STRIDE/PAL sites by networking with the Intertribal Council of Miami, Oklahoma. They brought an adult basic education class to the work-place site for those who completed the basic skills course and were ready for more difficult pursuits.

Getting Down to the Basics of a Successful Literacy Program:

Ask yourself the following questions. If your responses are not positive, then you may not be the person to build a literacy program. (On the other hand, this may be just the challenge that you need!)

a. Do I see a need for personal commitment to helping many community segments that may not read and write at a functional level, even if some of these people may not want to be helped?

b. Am I able to spend long hours making arrangements and plans that may not reach the levels of success that other projects usually acheive? When others involved in the project disappoint me with lack of serious commitment, will I continue to go on?

c. Am I willing to lobby for organizational change in governmental and social behavior toward those who need greater educational benefits? *And* for those volunteers who chose to help out without compensation?

Some practical steps to follow as you begin thinking about a literacy program:

1. Know that your personal attitude toward community literacy is a commitment to change. (If you answered yes to the three questions above, then you are ready to begin.)

2. Find a sponsoring base of operations. Community colleges are great, as are libraries, or any organized service group that has established a positive public image. Ask for a few volunteers to help get you started. Check with VISTA and United Way for possible help.

3. Read the research. (Suggested bibliography available.) Read the census information that tells you of your local literacy standards. Be alert to illiteracy around you. Visit an Adult Basic Education classroom **and** talk with the local high school counselor to sample the diversity of the problem.

4. Plan your approach and establish a purpose. For example, will you begin with an adult literacy program with one-on-one tutoring, or will you tackle a PACT program at the local high school? Or perhaps you want to start a neighborhood awareness program for parents who want to help their children become better readers.

To get started: List four possible targets, then narrow to one. Try to chose a target that will be a good model for future expansion.)

List five businesses,corporations, private individuals, or civic groups that might donate "seed money" for your project.

List at least five resource agencies and organizations with whom you will network.

5. Decide what kind of tutor training you will use. (STRIDE uses Laubach, but there are other programs available. You may even want to look at computerized tutoring, based on your purpose.) Do not be hesitant to combine materials and training resources after you are established. Find out who in your geographical area is a trainer, or might put you in touch with one. (A list of literacy contacts is available from the presentor.)

6. Determine the costs involved. Count your salary (or stipend), materials, trainer fees (if any), mileage fees, telephone and other utility bills, printing costs, and incidental expenses. If your base is a college, some of these costs may be addressed as institutional expenses. Talk to your supervisor about the feasibility of a community literacy program on campus.

7. Ask about alternate sources of funding. Missouri will allocate funding for literacy materials used with students enrolled in a vocational program. The Department of Education has a program called Student Literacy Corps. Students must agree to tutor specified hours per week for credit as a community service. In return, funding to pay student coordinators of tutors is provided. Public libraries are often likely recipients of grants. Try networking with local libraries to discover funding sources, as well as other resources.

To get started: List at least two places you might start when looking for alternate funding sources that might turn into steady funding sources.

8. Find out how you will reach the greatest number of volunteers with the least possible expense. Make the announcement duo-purpose by asking for those who need help as well as those who will volunteer. Public service announcements in the media may be one way. Others include: personal letters, brochures, flyers, and speaking to civic and social groups. Contact local religious leaders to request mention in their weekly bulletin or newsletter.

To get started: List five specific groups that you feel comfortable in contacting:

9. Maintain a mailing list of all who showed an interest as a volunteer or student. Arrange for a training workshop, order materials, and send out a note of invitation. Hold your training in a place that is clean, well-lighted, and easily accessed. List three places that you might hold the training at little or no cost:

10. During tutor training, inform the participants how materials may be acquired and tell them what sort of record-keeping system you will use. You **must** keep track of tutoring hours in order to justify more funding, later. Keep records on each student and tutor. Each time you are in contact with either one, record it.

11. Do not discount any possible resources. The concept of "total resources" (money, people, goods, and services) is very important to networking within a community literacy program.

Evaluation: Work out a simple system of evaluation. Pre and post-test your students with a nationally normed test if possible. If not, then develop an informal inventory of your own and use it faithfully. (Local reading teachers are a great resource in suggesting tests or inventories.) Stress the importance of recording progress and tutoring hours to your volunteers. Take the time to evaluate your program every six months and do not be afraid to change anything that is not meeting your goals and expectations.

At STRIDE we use the WRAT (Wide Range Achievement Test), the Nelson Denny when more appropriate, and an informal diagnostic reading inventory. Each time a student progresses one reading level, it is recorded on a personal data card. A monthly count of tutor hours and number of program participants is maintained. Student and tutor contact is maintained through phone calls, personal visits, a tutor/student newsletter, and a tutor support group.

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Bibliographical Resources

The following list may provide direction for your program and accomodate the need for gathering resources.

The Bottom Line, Basic Skills in the Workplace. published jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education, 1988. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. (A pamphlet dealing with basic methods of establishing workplace literacy programs. This booklet contains a wealth of references and suggested reading.)

Discover Total Resources. A Guide for Nonprofits. published by Mellon Bank Corporation, 1985. Community Affairs Division, One Mellon Bank Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15258. (This valuable booklet contains lists of funding resources and tells how to network with all community resources. An excellent source of information.)

Gilbert, Stan. "ESL, Addressing the Needs of English-as-a-Second Language Students",, Community, Technical, and Junior College Journal, vol. 60, number 1 , Aug./Sept. 1989,.(An interesting look at how one junior college established a complete program for non-native English speakers.)

Kozol , Jonathan, Illiterate America. Anchor Press/Doubleday. Garden City, New York, 1985. (One of America's foremost leaders in literacy addresses the national disgrace of a ballooning illiteracy rate in no uncertain terms. Many valuable resources are listed and startling statistics revealed.)

Sticht, Thomas. "Literacy and Human Resources Development at Work: Investing in the Education of Adults to Improve the Educability of Children." Human Resources Research Organization, Alexandria, Virginia, February, 1983. (Sticht is recognized as a modern authority on adult illiteracy.)

Tussing, Ann K. Everyday Reading and Writing. New Readers Press, Syracuse, New York, 1978.

For a variety of free documents and listings you may obtain ordering information from: User Services Coordinator, ERIC Clearinghous on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210-1090.

For a Laubach materials catalog write: New Reader's Press, Publishing Division of Laubach Literacy International, 1320 Jamesville Avenue, Box 131, Syracuse, New York 13210.

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